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THE MUSICAL TIMES,
And Singing Class Circular.
OCTOBER 1st, 1854.

Music in this Number.

THOU VISITEST THE EARTH.
(Thanksgiving Anthem.)
Composed by DR. GREENE.

MOZART'S MASSES.

THE REQUIEM.

Contributed by E. HOLMES.

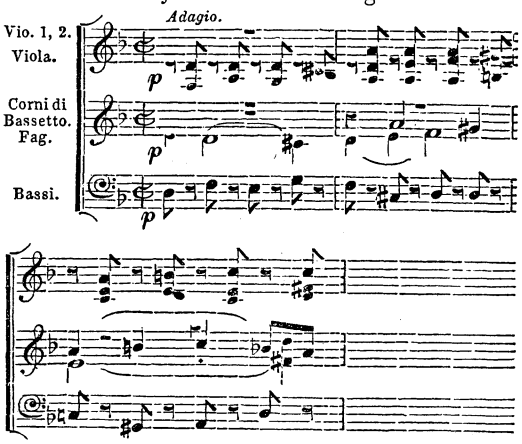
(Continued from page 146.)

THE work before us is peculiar as it respects the instruments employed in it; no Masses by Mozart are similarly scored; the priestly music in the *Zauberflöte* alone has some affinity with the *Requiem*. The composer discards the whole tribe of acute wind instruments except trumpets, and these he employs chiefly in their lower and middle notes. There are no horns. To the usual four-voice and stringed parts of his orchestra, he joins two basset-horns (tenor clarionets) in F,* two bassoons, two trumpets and drums, and incidentally three trombones. Varying these in their combination, he continues through all the movements of the composition, whether grave, sweet, or majestic, with their aid alone. With such a plan for a *Requiem* as he had matured,—with ideas so great and new, conjoining science and beauty, he needed not to travel far afield in search of effects. The medium of expression was simple, and ready at his hand—he decided what it should be, and required nothing more.

The beginnings of great works in music and poetry should correspond with their theme, and sound the true note of preparation for it. For a noble edifice we require a vestibule of due proportions, to elevate the mind and adapt it by degrees to the contemplation of grandeur. Yet the opening notes of a composition often cause such trouble and hesitation to the inventor, that we wonder, seeing them happily done, if any one in music ever followed the old maxim—*begin at the beginning*. An overture to an opera, like the preface to a book, is written last, and often the more successfully from the warmth and stimulus of previous composition.

The introduction to the *Requiem* is memorable on several accounts; the subject begins at once in the very first bar, apparently without studied preparation or a single superfluous note. The mournful cantabile commenced by the bassoons, and answered by the basset horns in a short fugued passage of four parts, continued for six bars, announces the principal subject, afterwards taken up by the voices—"Requiem æternam." This prelude is one of the most remarkable beginnings in all music; every hearer of sensibility feels its propriety; it solemnizes the mind, and adapts it to receive what is to follow; yet the musician who can appreciate both the poetical and scientific character of such music, receives from it a double enjoyment.

To consider the composition in the former aspect, we should place ourselves in imagination in the choir of a catholic cathedral in which important funeral solemnities are about to commence. The time is night, or daylight is excluded. The eye wanders through the uncertain gloom cast by candle light in a vast building hung with the insignia of mourning; now resting on priests or their acolytes; now on the palled coffin; or whatever of the solemn picturesque among the crowd, may momentarily attract it. All is preparation, silence, and suspense. At length the music steals in so quietly, that this part of the service is hardly known to have begun:—

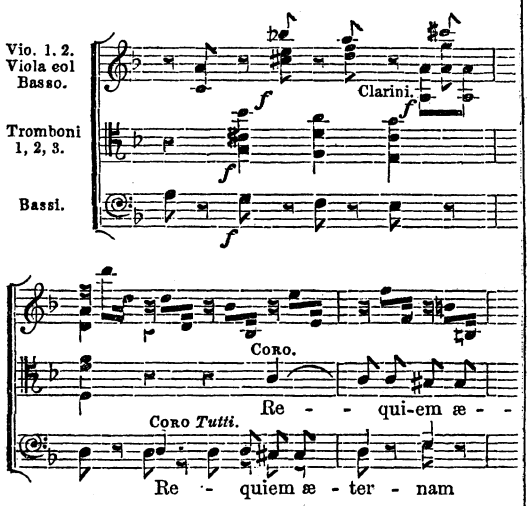


How well the soft staccato notes of the stringed instruments bring out this mournful cantabile! If we compare this introduction with that of Handel's Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline, we shall find nothing to impeach the honor of Mozart: in the one there is, indeed, the opening of the idea, but in the other its full application, completion, and development. In composing dirges, and pieces consecrated to the memory of the dead, musicians long distant in their standing, seem to be led by instinctive feeling to choose

* The Basset-horn, or Corno di Bassetto, being unknown to many, may be here described. It is a lengthened clarionet, curved towards the bell, which is of metal. It gives F in the place of C, sounding a fifth lower. Mozart approved these instruments, and must have heard them well played, for though he introduced them only in his two last operas and the *Requiem*, he wrote for them from early youth. As in all instruments of the reed kind, the quality of the tone depends much on the art of the player. When first heard in London at Billington's benefit at the Italian Opera, in *La Clemenza di Tito*, the tone was not admired. Willman had, however, not yet appeared. He was an artist so accomplished, that though he introduced many varieties of the clarionet, he made whatever he played upon to be liked.

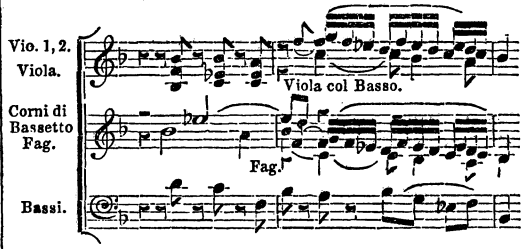
the same melancholy chords and progressions. The last part of Bateson's fine madrigal on the death of Queen Elizabeth, "In heaven lives Oriana," has even a strong resemblance in its harmonies and progressions to the opening of Mozart's *Requiem*.

The *forte* which follows the quiet wind instrument symphony, is startling and tremendous. Three tromboni usher in the voices, and then are silent for the rest of the movement.*

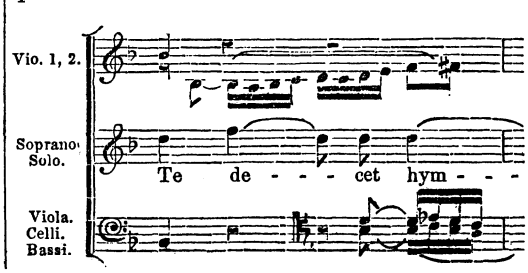


The agitated and impassioned syncopated feature for the violins which appears in the second bar, produces an indescribable effect. It gives a totally new character to what we had previously heard as a mild organ symphony in the old fugued style.† Without doubt this subject and its accompaniment formed the first thought of the *Requiem*, and the introductory symphony was constructed afterwards to lead to it. Here Mozart brought his modern dramatic experience and his powers as a symphonist into play; he altered the old church music, and gave it the stamp of his individuality, yet without violence. All that can delight the ear in smoothness and elegance is combined with severe science and poetry of design.

The constructive art employed in this remarkable introduction is so great, that the music deserves not only to be heard and enjoyed, but to be attentively studied. At the end of the cadence in B flat, "luceat eis," in which the voices subside to *piano*, an imitation of the first subject is introduced in the basset-horns in the major mode for one bar of melodious symphony, and then the principal second subject, intended to work with the first in double counterpoint, makes its appearance, but first as a mere melody in the violins, doubled in octaves by the bassoons. Its destination is as yet a secret to the listener.

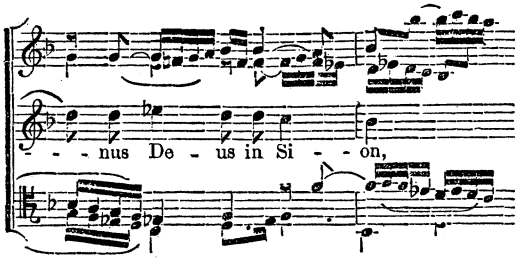


Placing all considerations of the flowing beauty of this phrase apart, as already well appreciated, we may find pleasure not nearly exhausted in directing attention to the profound contrivance and purpose of the musician. The subject in semiquavers in the major mode having first done duty as a melody, inverted in the second violins becomes the accompaniment to the soprano solo, "Te decet hymnus," the answer is doubled in thirds in the viole and violoncelli—then in the same melody drawn closer, the first violin begins a canon which is replied to in contrary motion by the second violins and tenors, and at a bar distance by the violoncellos; the whole accompaniment forming a canon in four parts, which is so clear and rhythmical, that its effect is that of flowing simplicity. Not once is the music interrupted to make a parade of contrivance; the severe ecclesiastical melody of the solo voice enters at stated and rhythmical periods, unimpeded by the flowing sounds of the accompaniments, which seem to wander "at their own sweet will," and to have nothing of art in them. The musician will be glad to revive the recollection of this passage, which begins precisely where our last quotation terminated :—

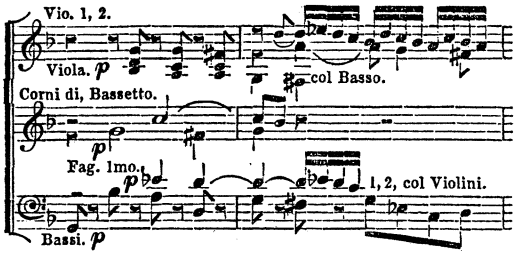


* Mozart's sparing employment of the trombones, reminds us that the superfluity of *brass* is the standing abomination of modern performance. The sounds of these instruments, coarsely blown, even infest the streets of the West-end on summer evenings; while at our choral concerts, conductors seldom obey the literal directions of the composer, but set their trombones to play in unison with the voices. Their powerful tones help to keep the time of masses of singers, and to cover what is false in their intonation. Having engaged the players, it is thought best by directors "to pay them for playing and not for resting;" but the public ear loses by this familiarity, and there is no longer in the sounds of the trombone that awful and sepulchral character which it was wont to have when its peculiarities, were reserved for special occasions.

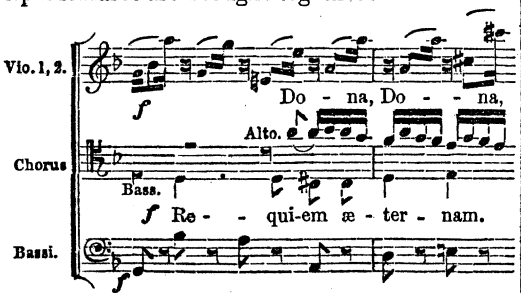
† The gusto with which Spagnoletti and some players of his school used to perform these passages of accompaniment is still fresh in our recollection, and the pages of the *Requiem* recall the past like a gallery of historical portraits. We find the players of the present day greatly advanced in execution and power; but in the art of accompanying such music as this, there is a decided falling off. The loss of the "Ancient Concert," as a school of the traditions of performance, will never be replaced.



This is a remarkable instance of the extension of a musical idea by means of counterpoint, in which science is directed by taste; yet still it indicates something better in reserve. When the subject begun in the major in the last quotation but one, is first heard, the expression is one of sweetness and dignity; but on resuming it in the minor, its character is changed, it becomes mournful and plaintive in the highest degree. The effect of this contrast should not be unobserved in examining the thoughtful mode in which the composer has worked out his design, heightening by degrees the interest of his passages, never repeating them without improvement, and holding back his best ideas for the proper opportunity. The climax of this chorus is the last entrance of the principal subject, which is unexpectedly introduced by the basses in D minor, on an instrumental cadence in G minor; the moving subject first heard as a symphony now works with it in double counterpoint—as also the syncopated phrase for the violins. For this the composer thus prepares us:

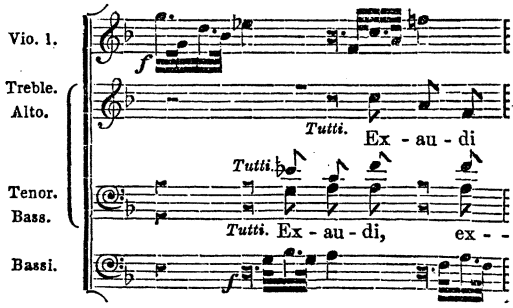


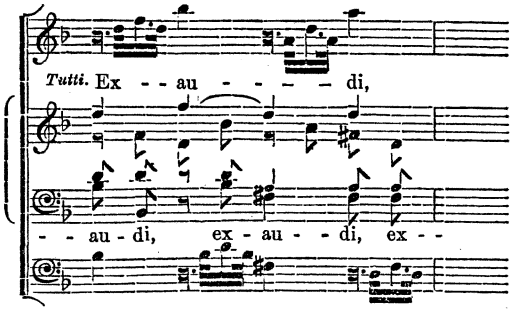
The plaintive notes of the first bassoon, now brought in half a bar earlier than before, and in the minor key, greatly enhance the expression, as is at once apparent to the musician. This is to prepare for the next bar, in which the three principal features are brought together:—



Designing from the first to repeat this remarkable chorus as the termination of the work, it is certain that the author dwelt upon it with unusual pleasure as one of his best productions. It is found at the close with eighteen bars curtailed. His judgment in his own works as to what it would be desired to hear twice was unerring; and whenever in his instrumental quartets or quintets, we find signs of repetition in unexpected places, the music is sure to be distinguished. The second part of the first Allegro of the famous stringed quintet in G minor, is marked to be repeated on account of the elaborate beauty of the Coda.

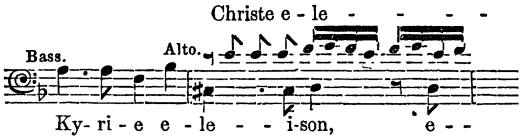
Scarcely a thought appears in the introduction to the *Requiem*, which has not a double destination. The repetition of the soprano solo, "Te decet," as a *canto fermo* for the treble chorus, with a new accompaniment for voices and instruments, is a splendid point and of imposing grandeur:—





The bow instruments here have no new employment; this kind of accompaniment is common to Handel, to Hasse, Jomelli, and others: what is to be admired is the preparation for the *canto fermo* in the soprano part. We have directed attention to the thoughtful design of the author, in the hope that it may give to many a new interest in this music—but we must not miss its poetry. The expression of solemnity, of grandeur, sweetness, and pathos, has never been so happily blended in any piece of church music. The fugue; *Kyrie Eleison*, though a remarkably clear double fugue, falls short in interest of this most Mozartean introduction. Bach, Handel,

Haydn, have all treated in various places the principal subject of the fugue, *Kyrie Eleison*;—



Towards the middle of the fugue, the second subject receives a chromatic alteration, which is very effective—but in the main what is excellent in this work is common to the great masters. The orchestra doubles the voice parts, which preserves clearness and also the method of the old school. It is curious that in the last cadence, Adagio, the final chord is left without any third—a gothic combination, to which the ear is with difficulty reconciled.

(To be continued.)

CHOIR AND CHORUS SINGING.

(Continued from page 167.)

CHAPTER VIII.

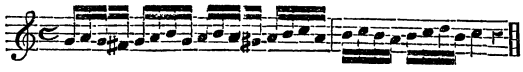
On the Articulation of the Vocal Organ, or Vocalisation in Chorus.

62. Ancient music of the German School, particularly Handel's Oratorios, contain choruses in which are very difficult passages, and which require a peculiar knowledge of vocalisation on the part of the singers. It must be owned that this quality is very rare among this kind of singers; whence it happens that the attempts which have been made in France, and in some other parts of Europe, to interpret this beautiful music in a suitable manner, have often been fruitless, and that the execution of the fugue in the Kyrie of Mozart's Requiem Mass is scarcely ever satisfactory.

63. Two obstacles arise to hinder the proper execution of pieces of this kind: the first consists, as I have just said, in the incapacity of the singers; the second, in the ignorance in which Directors of Choruses are of the real character of these works, and in consequence, the bad direction which they give them. In France, the movements are taken with too great rapidity; and the singers, giving all possible development to the power of their lungs, almost always make a horrible cacaphony of this same music, which, if sung well, would produce the finest effects.

64. Although one can never hope to bring mere Chorus-singers to a perfection equal to that of first-rate singers, it is not on that account impossible to attain to the degree of skill necessary for the execution of the pieces I have just now been mentioning; as is proved by the relative perfection we sometimes remark in these choruses in Germany, in England, in the Institution of Sacred Music, and lastly in the execution of the *Messiah* at the Musical Festival given at Brussels in 1834. I know that to attain even to a somewhat satisfactory execution, long practice is necessary; but in giving a certain order to these practices, the progress of the singers may be hastened.

The passages which should be vocalised on one syllable, such as this—



can only be practised collectively, when the Chorus is become skilful. At first, the Director of the School, or Conductor of the Chorus, should give individual practices, and make them in a slow movement, being careful to cause every note to be articulated by a supple movement of the vocal organ, and to unite them one to another with equality of tone. When these partial studies are sufficiently advanced, the choralists should be joined in groups of two, four, six, or eight of the same kind of voice; at last, when the trebles, altos, tenors, and basses have attained to a good execution, the four parts should be united.

65. If we would avoid confusion, all those choruses in which passages of vocalisation occur, should be performed in moderate time. This precaution is not only necessary, in order to render the delivery of the passages easier to the singers, but also in order to give the audience time enough to discern the commencement of the fugues, with which all pieces of this kind are filled in the Oratorios of Handel, Porpora, and some other old masters of their time.

66. It is necessary, also, to moderate the power of the voice in the execution of rapid passages dispersed throughout these choruses. Singing *mezza voce* has the best effect in these passages. The effect may however be augmented by light shadings of *crescendo* when the passage ascends, and of *decrescendo* when it descends; but it is difficult for a Chorus to do this when they are numerous.

67. There are beautiful models of vocalised choruses in the works of the authors above named; Handel is particularly distinguished in this style. His Oratorios contain admirable models; among these the *Messiah* appears to me to hold the first place. In the choruses of this Oratorio we find a richness of form which exists, perhaps, in no other composition. I will here mention, as excellent studies, some of the finest choruses in that beautiful work, which contain these vocalised divisions, viz.:—"And he shall purify the sons of Levi;" "For unto us a child is born;" "His yoke is easy;" &c.

N.B.—The *Messiah* is so well known, and so accessible to all English Choirs, that it seems superfluous to give the quotations from these three choruses, printed by M. Fetis.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Melodic Phrase, the Harmonic Phrase, and the Rhythmical Phrase.

68. The phrase in music is a fragment of the idea of the composer, contained in a certain number of measures. Several phrases complete this idea.

69. It would be impossible to represent truthfully that which the composer has imagined, if the performers did not properly understand the character of his thought; now, this does not always happen—or rather, it very rarely happens. If it were only necessary to ascertain whether the object of the piece to be sung is grave or gay, calm or impassioned, one could not be long in uncertainty, and the singers would soon understand the character they must give to their performance. But music has not always the decided tinge of those affections of the soul, of which mention has just been made. It may express different sentiments by multitudes of shadings; often, indeed, its most powerful charm lies in a kind of vagueness, which leaves the real object of the composition unperceived, while yet there is a sentiment in its contexture which does not escape musicians of delicate perception.

70. But that which is comprehended without diffi-